

University Committee on International Affairs (UCIA)

January 27, 2025

526 Prices Fork Road/Zoom

Minutes

Attendance: Tom Archibald (Presiding), Jessica Folkart, Theresa Johansson, Elsie Paredes

Zoom Attendance: Reza Barkhi (for Michelle Seref), Brian Bond, Rob Emmett (for Lauren Oliver), Guru Ghosh, Farida Jalalzai, Charles Lowery, Kim McKinnie, Mallory Miller, Jennifer Nardine, Courtney Powell, Cassidy Rist, Nicole Sanderlin

Alternate Representatives and Guests: Amanda Broome, Rachel Fitzgerald, Kathy Hager, Khaled Hassouna, Rich Mathieson, Susan Short

Tom Archibald welcomed the group and called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. Visual attendance was taken; quorum was established.

1. **Agenda Approval:** Tom A. asked for edits to the agenda; additions to the agenda include updates to research programs and federal actions as a result from the nation's change in administrative leadership as well as the potential role of UCIA in tracking and responding to federal government changes, to be included in Agenda number 4 under updates. A motion to approve the agenda; was made and seconded; the agenda was approved with the aforementioned edits.
2. **Announcement of Approval of Minutes, November 18, 2024:** The minutes from the November 18, 2024 meeting had been previously distributed electronically, and were approved electronically.
3. **Vice Chair for UCIA:** Tom A. indicated that Elsie Paredes has agreed to serve as Vice Chair for the remainder of the Academic Year, and will assume the role of Chair beginning fall 2025.
4. **Updates:**
 - a. **Federal Government Executive Orders:** Tom A. discussed the various executive orders that are currently being mandated from the current administration of the U.S. Many of the orders effect University work in other countries as well as in our own country. Various USAID projects are on hold as well as many Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. There are stop work orders that became effective over the weekend and effect Bangladesh, India, the West Bank/Gaza, Jordan and potentially Tunisia. Proposals are affected as well as employees working on these projects on campus and globally. Rob Emmett indicated the Cranwell Center is closely monitoring developments and how they affect international students as all visa statuses may be scrutinized in the upcoming weeks and months. Rob included a NAFSA link: <https://www.nafsa.org/executive-and-regulatory-actions-trump2admin>; which included the verbiage as related to international students "Increased scrutiny could result in delays and additional requirements for student and scholar visa applicants. Students and scholars from countries identified through the process described in Section 2 may face bans on admission to the United States or increased visa denials".

Mallory Miller offered that the office of inclusion and diversity no longer exists at Virginia Tech. Menah Pratt is Vice President for Inclusive Strategy and Excellence <https://news.vt.edu/articles/2024/12/president-new-office.html>.

Guru Ghosh discussed the impact on restricted positions and graduate students, adding that the university is considering various options for bridge funding. Tom indicated clarification has not been made regarding the work stoppage, and there are several meetings ongoing over the next few days internally. The legality of the orders is being evaluated and lawsuits could be forthcoming from various entities towards the federal government. Guru also added there is a stop order on Virginia Tech's Botswana project as well. Currently there is no across the board State Department stop work order, except the stop work order for USAID projects. Student

mobility and employment permits for international students may be an issue in the future and we need to be vigilant on this matter; there is uncertainty with regard to the mention of gender as applicable to grants but it is unclear as to the relation to DEI language. Rachel Fitzgerald indicated Passports are no longer issued with the "X" designation for gender. Rob mentioned the enforcement of removal of those individuals that are in the U.S. without legal backing which included churches, schools and universities.

There was considerable discussion about the definition of DEI being used by the federal government. Strategy to advance discussions for policy changes were suggested. The suggestion was made for UCIA members, representatives and guests to utilize the email distribution for UCIA in order to send notices or information that is discovered as it affects our work; as well as for Guru to share with Virginia Tech administration UCIA's commitment to collaborations across the University.

There was a question regarding be approached asking for comments or further questions regarding the orders, Guru indicated that comments should be directed to the University Communications Office. Student information is not shared, inquiries should be directed to the Cranwell Center regarding student protocol; employee information is also not shared, questions regarding employee protocols can be directed to Human Resource and protocols regarding visa protocols can be directed to Global Strategic Services.

Rob indicated there are regular trainings that are upcoming for faculty and staff and the support of international students, faculty and staff.

The question was raised as to whether Virginia Tech's administration would be sending out a statement and information regarding how the University community should respond; Guru indicated that he would raise the question and did not want to preempt any other notifications that could be forthcoming. Reza Barkhi uplifted the University's responsibility to provide an environment for those to thrive and need to be supported and agreed that further information should be gathered before reacting. He went on to say that communication to people that they are heard and supported is paramount. Cassidy Rist asked if contact information could be included in the minutes. Based on UCIA feedback, Rich will compile and publicize a university-wide list of resources to support international students. Please email suggestions for resources to be included in this list (places people can turn to for answers) to Rich Mathieson at richm@vt.edu.

- b. Rachel Fitzgerald expressed her gratitude to UCIA for their support of International Education Week (IEW) and all the supporters. She also thanked Amanda Broome, Rich Mathieson, speakers, ICAT, Steger Center, Graduate Center, CETL, TLOS, University Libraries, Moss Arts Center, GEO and so many more people that had a hand in the event. Please complete this brief survey to provide input on IEW for the future: <https://forms.office.com/r/eUx8hvkq2f>. The timing of the event in 2024 worked well for the second week of November, the national event occurs the third week of November. The planning group welcomes new participants, please contact Rachel raegait@vt.edu.
 - c. Rachel spoke about the Internationalization at Home Global Learning Badge. Currently there is a pilot program participating to shape the program.
 - d. Amanda updated the group on the Global Website <https://global.vt.edu/>; a resource hub for students, researchers, faculty and staff. Please review the site and provide comments/feedback to Amanda abroome@vt.edu.
5. **Member Announcements/Comments:** Theresa Johansson asked Rob about the timeline for the trainings that are being developed, Rob responded this spring about twice a semester. Individual sessions for

departments can also be set up; his email is rsemmett18@vt.edu. The purpose of the Community International Student & Family Support Network includes: 1) Name and form a community-university leadership network. 2) Provide a formal, recognized process for identifying community partners who provide services benefiting international students at Virginia Tech, so that international students at VT can navigate available community support resources more easily and community partners can share their information in relevant, efficient ways with current international students. 3) Convene a steering committee that meets once a semester (minimum) and is available as needed to provide oversight and troubleshooting around any critical incidents affecting students or volunteers occurring in the community network. 4) Build communication infrastructure in ways that connect international students at Virginia Tech's Blacksburg campus with Town of Blacksburg and NRV. Reza indicated discussions and comments should be framed within the land grant mission. Rob commended Rachel for all her work and leadership with IEW. There were no further comments.

6. **Announcement of Next Meeting:** Tom A. thanked the members and announced the next meeting will be February 24, 2025 (10:00 a.m. Blacksburg/4:00 p.m. Switzerland) and encouraged members to attend in person. **PLEASE NOTE:** This meeting will be both an in-person and Zoom (hybrid) meeting; for those that are local, please join us at 526 Prices Fork Road, Large Conference Room.
7. **Adjournment:** There being no further business and no objections, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded; all were in favor the meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m. (Blacksburg).

PROPOSED MEETING DATES FOR 2024-2025

- February 24, 2025
- March 24, 2025 (3:00-4:00 p.m. Swiss*)
- April 28, 2025
- **NO MAY MEETING**

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Rhodes, Recording Secretary